

## RSA: Healthcare Regional Skills Alliance of Northwest Michigan

Northern Michigan is a geographically widespread, rural community. Small business is the foundation of our economy. Small establishments, such as nursing homes, adult foster care homes, and home health care providers, face obstacles in providing training for their staff and in finding qualified new workers. They cannot train their entire workforce at once because patient needs are their top priority. They cannot provide trainings in-house, due to the overhead involved. The Healthcare Regional Skills Alliance of Northwest Michigan (Healthcare RSA) provides low-cost training opportunities to these small organizations and for the direct care workforce. Trainings include Basic Healthcare Classes, Certified Nurse Aid trainings, and Staff Development Trainings.

The Healthcare RSA also coordinated a "Skills Lab," where home health care workers received skills testing and certification in one location. Several small organizations sent workers to the Skills Lab, saving the thousands of dollars it would have cost to hire a certified tester.

Harbor Home Health Care, a provider of direct care home health aids in Petoskey, Michigan, assisted in coordinating the Skills Fair, and has also been participating in a pilot Apprenticeship Program. The Apprenticeship Program provides for a comprehensive training curriculum, combining academic education, lab training, on the job training, and work experience.

Marcia Peterson, Nursing Manager at Harbor Home Health Care, says that she could not complete her ongoing education requirements without the Healthcare RSA and its training partner, Community Services Network. "Sending employees to these trainings is much more cost-effective than creating an entire training program here," says Marcia. She is thrilled that the Healthcare RSA already has a curriculum; she does not need to create her own.

Marcia feels that this RSA is a great way for government to work with business, due to the collaboration involved. "Collaboration is necessary in this region because of the cost savings. Sharing resources helps everybody." The collaboration that occurred to create the Skills Lab is a great example of government and business joining together to meet the needs of business, the workforce, and the community.

Marcia hopes to see more classes from the RSA in the coming year. She wants more subjects to be offered, and more often. She hopes that other agencies will join the apprenticeship program. "We need to produce a well-educated direct care workforce in our area. That's important to the entire community."

201-721-2111

05-081106-01

## Approval/Release

*The notes above are an accurate account of my interview regarding the Michigan Regional Skills Alliance in which I participate. I authorize the RSA and the State of Michigan to disseminate the story publicly.*

☒ You may use my name and the name of my business.

☐ You may not use identifying information, only the content of the interview.

  
(Signature)

Date: 8/10/06